

# **Virginia Water Supply Planning: A Brief History and Status Report**

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# Early Water Planning Activities

- Legislatively commissioned
- Relatively narrow scope with short term focus
- Focus: navigation, water power, or fisheries
- Water supply planning primarily a local concern
- Waterworks oversight responsibilities assigned to State Department of Health
- Water quality program initiated / State Water Control Board created in 1946 (initial federal water quality program created in 1946)

# Development of Continuing Water Supply Planning Program

- [1965: Federal Water Resources Planning Act adopted with state planning assistance]
- 1966: Authority for “comprehensive water and related land resources planning” granted to Dept. of Conservation and Economic Development (Division of Water Resources)
- [1971: VA Constitution with natural resources/ environmental provisions adopted]
- [1972: Natural Resources Secretariat created]
- 1972: Water planning program transferred to State Water Control Board (DEQ)
- [1972: Federal Clean Water Act adopted]

# Development of Water Supply Planning Program, continued

- [1973: Groundwater Act of 1973 adopted]
- [1977: State Water (Study) Commission created]
- 1981: Revision of 1966 legislation gave more emphasis to water supply planning
- 1980s: River basin plans completed
- [1989: Instream water use protection measures adopted
  - Expansion of “beneficial water use” definition
  - VA Water Protection Permit Program
  - Surface Water Management Area Act]

# Decline of Water Supply Planning

- Decline began in mid 1980s
- Contributing factors include
  - Increasing demands of water quality planning under the federal Clean Water Act
  - Termination of federal incentives for water resources planning
  - Assignment of new responsibilities to state agencies without new resources
  - View that planning is a short term activity to produce a “plan”
  - View that water supply is a local matter
  - Absence of a major drought for a period of years

# Consequences of Reduced Planning

- Greater reliance on regulatory proceedings as a substitute for planning
- More local/local and local/federal conflict
- Greater uncertainty among local water managers
- Lower state influence in water supply
- Weakened state position for addressing drought or other management issues

# The Current Situation: Expanding State Activity

- Recent drought has created renewed interest in water supply at the state level
  - Virginia Water Supply Initiative
  - Water planning legislation of 2003
  - Water Policy Technical Advisory Committee

# Issues for Consideration in Expansion of State Planning

- Structure of the state planning function
  - Relative roles of DEQ and VDH
  - Continuous planning process vs. preparation of a “state plan”
  - Prioritization of issues to allow focused attention within a comprehensive water planning approach
  - Coordination of planning with regulation (permits)
  - Coordination of water supply / water quality planning
  - Staffing / resource requirements

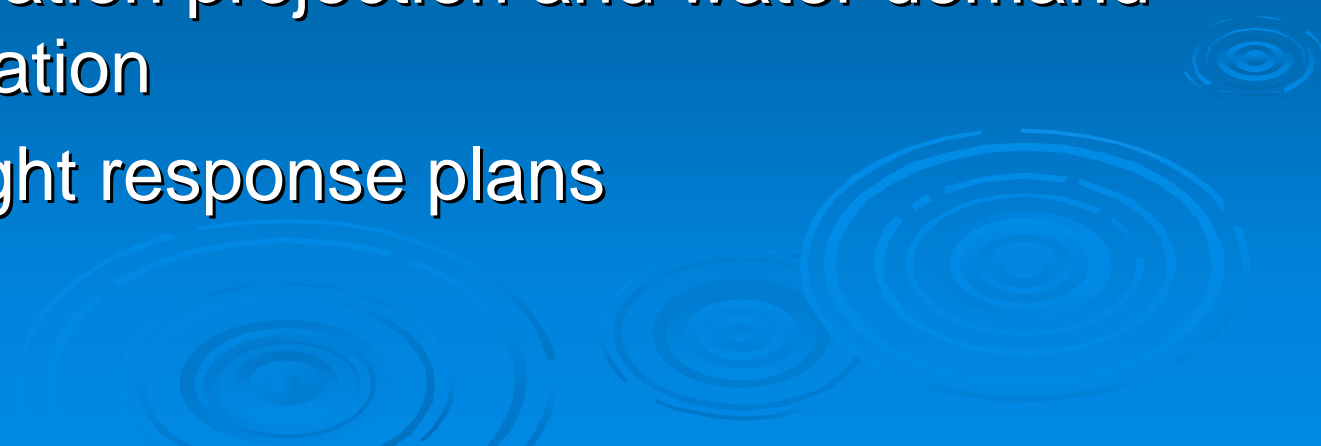
# Issues to Consider, continued

- Data collection and analysis capabilities
  - Streamflow
  - Ground water potential
  - Environmental water needs (minimum flows)
  - Regional supply adequacy

# Issues to Consider, continued


- State/local relationship
  - Mandatory vs. voluntary local plans (economic assistance / incentives)
  - Regionalization incentives
  - Conflict resolution procedures
    - Locality vs. locality (interjurisdictional impacts)
    - Locality vs. another state
    - Locality vs. federal

# Issues to Consider, continued

- Scope of planning guidelines for localities/regional organizations
    - Safe yield determination
    - Adequacy of water conservation programs
    - Population projection and water demand estimation
    - Drought response plans
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# Conclusion

A continuous, adequately staffed state water supply planning function, operating within the framework of comprehensive water and natural resource planning, is essential to maximizing the potential benefits of the water resource to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

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